

FAQS

Custom home Design Projects

DO I NEED BOTH AN ARCHITECT AND INTERIOR DESIGNER FOR MY PROJECT?

THAT DEPENDS ON YOUR CHOICE of architect and your preferences. Typically, architects are responsible for the space planning, structure and exterior of the building, while interior designers are called upon to do kitchens, bathrooms, and select interior finishes. However, some architects (including us) also excel in interior planning and finish work, so you will have **a single source of both creative vision and responsibility**. If you use a separate designer, make sure they collaborate with the architect so all decisions are coordinated to achieve an harmonious design throughout.

HOW CAN I GET A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF DIFFERENT DESIGN STYLES AND FIGURE OUT WHAT I LIKE BEST?

UNTIL RECENTLY, PEOPLE WOULD buy design magazines and cut out pictures they liked. Today's online resources provide a much easier process and more comprehensive range of images to search and select from.

A great website for residential design is houzz.com. They have an enormous library of images submitted by architects, designers and suppliers that are easily sorted by room type, style, and budget. You can create "Ideabooks" on their website, where you save images you like. Use them like file folders to separate different aspects of the project. After a while you will notice patterns develop that illuminate exactly what "your style" is. This is also a great tool to **share with your architect, who can then help you synthesize this into a cohesive design aesthetic** that you helped to create.

Pinterest is another source for searching for images with keywords. Like houzz, you create "Boards", which are collections of images with links back to the original source. You can "pin" photos from almost any source to your Pinterest boards, so you're not restricted to their own web site for reference material.

HOW LONG WILL MY PROJECT TAKE?

THINK ABOUT AND SHARE WITH your architect key target dates that are important to you. When do you want to start and finish the project? Bear in mind, as a rule of thumb, depending on the scope of the project, it takes **at least 4-8 months to finalize the design, prepare construction drawings, hire a contractor, and obtain building permits before construction work can begin**. If you need a zoning variance to build your project, this process can add several months.

You are less likely to be disappointed if you allow at least 6-9 months for work on existing homes and about 12 -18 months for new homes. Times may vary depending on the scope and complexity of your project.

WHAT WILL MY PROJECT COST?

THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT questions to answer before there is a well defined project scope, and analysis of your needs. A custom home project is only successful if it is practical, beautiful and affordable. There are three variables in the budget with any home. Size, Quality and Cost. New houses are a little easier to determine once you know the approximate size and quality level you are aiming for. Renovations and additions are trickier to assess, as so much is dependent on the condition of the existing house and which parts of the house will be renovated. We have a blog post that addresses specific cost guidelines in more detail. <http://www.garyrosard.com/what-will-it-cost>

It is important for the success of your project that the architect knows your budget. Some clients are a little reluctant to divulge this answer, fearing that the architect will simply spend the entire budget. The truth is that most people do not know what their project will cost, and over estimate what they can build within their budget. **Part of the job of the architect is to figure out a way to fit all the wants, desires and needs into your budget**, and to guide you in making the best decisions along the way.

IS IT BETTER TO HAVE SEVERAL CONTRACTORS BID ON THE PROJECT OR TO PRE SELECT A CONTRACTOR?

THERE ARE ADVANTAGES AND disadvantages to both. Common wisdom is that you should always get several competitive bids before selecting a contractor. But pre-selecting a contractor can have several benefits as well. **Selecting a qualified contractor to take on what is surely one of the most important investments you will ever make, not only in terms of monetary value but also in terms of your happiness and well being, is no easy choice.**

If you won't rest easy unless you know you're getting the best price possible by getting several bids, then this should be the way to go. In order for this to be successful, you should have a set of drawings, specifications and product selections that are as complete as possible before sending out to bid to make sure that all bidders are working from the same assumptions. When the design is vague, contractors will either price only what's clearly stated on the drawings, or assume the minimum cost option for missing items in order to make their bid competitive, knowing that they will be issuing change orders once the project gets going.

The other option is to interview several contractors, get references, then commit to one of them in advance. This offers the opportunity to bring them on board during the design phase to prepare preliminary estimates, which will then be adjusted to a final estimate before you start the work. They become part of the team early on and can help with value engineering. This process also can save time at several stages along the way if you're on a tight schedule.



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